

Comments from:
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There are 786,000 people in Alabama who are age 60 and above representing 17.5% of the total state population. We are ranked 22nd in the nation in the number of people age 60 and above and are ranked 14th in the percentage of people who are age 60 and above. Between 2000 and 2025, the senior population will be increased by 78.5%. As you have already heard stated today, this is going to be mainly due to the tremendous impact of the Baby Boomer Generation on our society. This group is also known as the Sandwich Generation because they still have children at home who are under the age of 18 to care for in addition to taking care of elderly or disables relatives. The first of this group, born in 1946, will reach 60 in just a little over a year

The fastest growing segment of the population here in Jefferson County are those who are age 85 and older, currently representing 10% of our total senior population. Included in our county meals on wheels program are four individuals over the age of 100 and 101 people over the age of 90. People are just living longer and their needs continue to increase. Our aging programs and the services provided by our communities must prepare now to meet these increased demands and identify additional funding for the future.

There are numerous areas that must be addressed and we wish to comment on just a couple. We recognize the benefits of providing an opportunity for seniors to remain as independent as possible. One of the biggest concerns for the future is the availability and the affordability of manageable housing, preferably in a planned community with shopping and recreation in the area and also with a measure of security. There needs to be a variety of housing types serving persons of moderate and middle incomes ranging from single family communities and service enriched senior facilities to continuing care retirement communities. In the coming years, service industries must be increased to meet the growing needs of our senior citizens. Our Baby Boomer Seniors will demand more opportunity to be involved in the communities in which they reside. More support for caregivers must be made available. Social Security and Medicare must be fully funded.

There are over 113,000 children in Alabama living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives. Half of them are under the age of six and 27% of them are living in poverty. These numbers are growing each year and will continue to represent a significant problem and a challenge in the future. Expanded services and support for all sources, federal, state, and local must be generated to address this problem. It has been determined that 85% of the elderly who need care are helped by relatives, 5% reside in nursing homes and the rest are in assisted living or in other facilities as people live longer. Sometimes they outlive all of their family members and become known as elder orphans. They were formerly able to live alone and remained self sufficient because of the assistance of family members. Take that assistance away and these seniors risk premature placement in nursing homes. Combine this with the trend toward smaller families and there will be a problem in the future of not having enough nursing home beds to meet the demand simply because there are not as many caregivers.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these concerns to you.